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Regional cooperation

Regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

Cooperation with other regional bodies

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Introduction

1. The regional commissions continue to intensify cooperation with relevant regional bodies in their respective regions. The convening of the regional preparatory meetings for financing for development, organized by the five regional commissions in the second half of 2000, amply demonstrates this close cooperation. This cooperation is based on three principles: (a) that the needs of each region are better served by a common strategy and policy cohesion that are based on shared assessments of issues and supported by coordinated activities; (b) a division of labour based on comparative advantages and expertise; and (c) budgetary constraints that require efficient use of resources.

I. Economic Commission for Europe

2. Cooperation between the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has been long-standing with ECE supporting the work of OSCE in the following ways: (a) at the invitation of the President-in-Office, the ECE Executive Secretary presents regularly to the governing body of OSCE, the Permanent Council, the current status of cooperation between the two organizations and suggestions for the strategic direction for future cooperation; (b) ECE is responsible for the substantive review of the OSCE States' commitments in the economic dimension, including the Helsinki Final Act and the Document of the Bonn Conference on Economic Cooperation in Europe (Bonn Document);[1] for that purpose, ECE prepares each year a study on transition and development in Europe; and (c) ECE provides studies, speakers and support for the holding of the seminars preparatory to the annual Economic Forum. It participates in the meetings of the OSCE parliamentary bodies. In addition, ECE brings a number of advantages and expertise, most notably its economic analyses, conventions and guidelines for sustainable economic development; and its partnerships with the business community and civil society.

3. In the field of economic analysis, close contacts have also been maintained with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) with respect to countries with economies in transition.

4. In the field of environment, the cooperation between the two organizations is quite broad. A major area of cooperation is the environmental performance review programme, in which OECD experience is applied to a number of countries in transition within the ECE framework.

5. The ECE Working Party on Standardization of Perishable Produce and Quality Development has cooperated closely with the OECD Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruit and Vegetables. The OECD Scheme adopts the United Nations/ECE standards and creates explanatory brochures based on them to facilitate their application.

6. In the area of statistics, ECE relies heavily on data collected by OECD for its economic analysis of Western European and North American countries. In return, ECE provides OECD with economic statistics for countries in transition. OECD is among the key intergovernmental organizations that actively participate in the Conference of European Statisticians, the plenary sessions of which alternate between ECE and OECD headquarters.

7. With respect to subregional organizations, ECE also cooperates with the Central European Initiative (CEI) and Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). These organizations, while enjoying the political support of their member countries, lack the infrastructure and capacity to implement many of their projects, relying on, inter alia, ECE for technical inputs and support.

II. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

8. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) secretariat has maintained close cooperation with other regional bodies such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and all three organizations participated in the second financial expert group meeting on ASEAN Mekong basin development cooperation held in Bangkok on 6 and 7 March 2001. An ad hoc task force consisting of ADB, ASEAN and ESCAP will undertake stocktaking and assessment of the development assistance needs of the ASEAN-Mekong countries with the objective of establishing the Mekong basin development bank. ESCAP has been collaborating with ADB under four

programmes to provide technical assistance for the development of the private sector in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS). Those programmes comprise: (a) Forum for the Comprehensive Development of Indo-China; (b) GMS Trade Facilitation Working Group; (c) GMS Business Forum; and (d) Working Group on the Greater Mekong Subregion Tourism Sector and the Mekong Tourism Forum.

9. In cooperation with ADB and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), ESCAP organized the regional high-level preparatory meeting for the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in Dhaka, Bangladesh, in November 2000. ESCAP also participated in the Asia and Pacific Forum on Poverty, which was organized by ADB in Manila from 5 to 8 February 2001. The Forum discussed various issues related to poverty reduction, the role of information, information and communication technologies (ICT), globalization, governance and education.

10. In the area of statistics, the ADB/OECD/ESCAP Workshop on Harmonizing and Strengthening Business Tendency Surveys was organized from 21 to 24 November 2000. The Joint ADB/ESCAP Concluding Workshop on Regional Technical Assistance (RETA) 5874: Rebasing and Linking of National Accounts Series was organized from 13 to 16 February 2001. In energy-related activities, ESCAP continued collaboration with various partner organizations, including ADB, ASEAN, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) as well as some national organizations. ADB substantively participated in the Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting (September 2000) and High-level Regional Meeting on Energy for Sustainable Development in Indonesia (November 2000).

11. ESCAP is maintaining close cooperation with subregional environmental organizations such as the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), the South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP) and ASEAN. ESCAP also cooperated on strategic environmental management for the Central Asian countries. The institutional development of the North-east Asian Subregional Programme of Environmental Cooperation for the six countries of North-east Asia is another major activity of ESCAP.

12. Having played a key role in the formation of Bangladesh-India-Myanmar-Sri Lanka-Thailand Economic Cooperation (BIMST-EC), ESCAP has continued to play a supportive role for furthering the objectives of the organization. In response to a request from the BIMST-EC Working Committee, ESCAP prepared a concept paper on trade facilitation in the BIMST-EC region, which was presented at the Third BIMST-EC Ministerial Meeting held in Yangon from 14 to 16 February 2001 and received the endorsement of the member States. In response to a similar request, ESCAP is currently preparing a study on cooperation in the textile and clothing sector among BIMST-EC countries. Similarly, ESCAP initiated a project to strengthen subregional economic cooperation in trade and investment among the south-western member countries of ESCAP, in cooperation with the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).

13. To support the initiatives taken by SAARC to expand trade by lowering tariffs within its subregion, national and subregional workshops were jointly organized by ESCAP and SAARC: one in Kathmandu, Nepal, in March 2000; two in Pakistan in April 2000; and a subregional workshop in India in August 2000.

14. The Fifth Consultative Meeting among Executive Heads of Subregional Organizations of the Asia Pacific region and ESCAP took place in Bangkok on 7 and 8 June 2000. It was attended by the Secretaries-General of SAARC and ASEAN and the Executive Secretary of ESCAP. The executive heads shared information on important developments and activities. A number of areas were suggested for further cooperation including international and regional trade policy, trade facilitation and e-commerce, development research and policy analysis, social development, statistics, environment and transport.

III. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

15. At their Tenth Summit of Iberoamerica meeting (Panama City, Panama, 18 November 2000), the Heads of State and Government of Iberoamerica requested the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) to elaborate, in close coordination with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

and the Secretariat for Iberoamerican Cooperation (SECIB), an assessment of the present situation of children in Iberoamerica, aimed at identifying concrete goals to improve prevailing trends regarding, inter alia, education, health and sanitary services, and the eradication of child labour. For the assessment, ECLAC initiated a coordinating effort involving inputs from agencies of the United Nations system and the Iberoamerican and Inter-American systems: UNICEF, SECIB, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Organization of Iberoamerican States for Education, Science and Culture (OEI), the Iberoamerican Youth Organization (OIJ), the Organization of American States (OAS), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA). The Government of Peru, in charge of the Pro-Tempore Secretariat of the Iberoamerica Summit, has also joined this coordinating effort. ECLAC will present the document to a Meeting of Iberoamerican Ministers Responsible for Social Affairs, to take place in Lima, Peru from 31 May to 1 June 2001, which is a preparatory meeting for the special session of the General Assembly on children.

16. ECLAC participation in the Summit of the Americas process has been taken to a higher level as a result of its full participation in the preparatory process for the Third Summit (Quebec, Canada, 21 and 22 April 2001). This is partly the result of the maturity of the Summit process itself (after almost a decade since the first meeting) and ECLAC's participation in the technical Tripartite Committee, together with OAS and IDB. Accordingly, ECLAC has adopted an approach of proactive collaboration, and has stressed, in different forums of the Summit of the Americas process, that there are two fundamental requirements in order for international cooperation in economic and social issues to be successful: a strong technical basis on the one hand, and a clear political will on the other. In this context, ECLAC has reaffirmed its firm commitment to continue to provide technical expertise to the process of the Summit of the Americas.

17. ECLAC cooperation with subregional integration bodies in the Caribbean has intensified during the present year, particularly with the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) secretariat and the Association of Caribbean States (ACS). The Council of Ministers of ACS conferred on ECLAC the status of Founding Observer, in recognition of ECLAC work for the promotion of the Caribbean integration process and for consolidating the Caribbean presence in the hemisphere and in the world. Moreover, as agreed at the Second Regional Coordination Meeting (Santiago, Chile, 15 May 2000), ECLAC organized a Subregional Inter-agency Coordination Meeting for the Caribbean, open to the participation of subregional integration institutions in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, on 8 and 9 March 2001. CARICOM, ACS, the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA) and the Caribbean Environmental Health Institute (CEHI) as well as numerous United Nations agencies and programmes participated in the meeting.

18. There is a very strong collaboration between ECLAC and IDB. Three to four projects a year are approved for funding by IDB, and the President of the Bank participates regularly in major ECLAC conferences; since 1998, the Executive Secretary of ECLAC is invited to make a statement at the IDB annual meetings. Both organizations organize many joint seminars and meetings and IDB co-sponsored the regional meeting on financing for development organized by ECLAC, in Bogota, Colombia, in November 2000.

19. ECLAC and IDB underscored their standing cooperation by carrying out several joint activities in conjunction with the bank's Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors, which took place in Santiago, Chile, in March 2001. They organized three seminars on the following subjects: "Towards competitiveness: the meso- and microeconomic levels", "Towards competitiveness: the institutional path" and "Women and work". In addition, ECLAC hosted and took active part in a high-level forum on social equity organized by IDB.

IV. Economic Commission for Africa

20. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) continues to collaborate closely with the other regional intergovernmental bodies in Africa. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) was one of the partners that provided support for the African Development Forum 2000 (ADF 2000) on the theme of "AIDS: the Greatest Leadership Challenge" held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 3 to 7 December 2000. As a follow-up to ADF

2000, ECA and OAU collaborated in organizing the African Summit on Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS), Tuberculosis and Other Related Infectious Diseases, held in Abuja, Nigeria, on 26 and 27 April 2001.

21. ECA and the African Development Bank signed a Memorandum of Understanding on 6 September 2000 as a successor to the Cooperation Agreement that the two organizations had signed on 29 July 1986. The aim of the Memorandum of Understanding is to deepen cooperation between the two organizations with a view to contributing more effectively to the economic development and social progress of the countries of the region. The main areas of cooperation identified in the Memorandum of Understanding include research, economic and policy analysis and formulation; holding of joint conferences; financing for development; and collaboration on such issues as governance, environment, gender, regional integration, information technology etc. As part of the collaboration in the area of financing for development, the African Development Bank participated in and presented a paper at the High-level Regional Consultative Meeting on Financing for Development which was organized by ECA in Addis Ababa from 15 to 17 November 2000.

22. ECA held a Consultative Meeting with a number of regional economic communities (RECs) in March 2001 concerning ADF 2001 on the theme of regional integration. The aim of the consultation was to brief the representatives of the RECs on the thrust of ADF 2001 and to solicit the active participation of RECs in ADF 2001, given the fact that they were important stakeholders in the process of regional integration in Africa.

V. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

23. Cooperation with the League of Arab States and it subsidiary bodies continued in terms of holding joint meetings, making substantive contribution to meetings, implementing joint projects and following up on the recommendations of global conferences. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) also cooperated and coordinated activities with the following subsidiary bodies of the League: the Council of Economic Unity, the Union of Arab Engineers, the Arab Towns Organization, the Commission for Arab Women, the Arab Federation for Food Industries and the Arab Urban Development Institute.

24. The main areas of cooperation in the field of social development included follow-up action on the recommendations of five global conferences, and cooperating on development issues related to youth, the family and women, as follows: (a) follow-up to global conferences through the implementation of the project on integrated regional follow-up by Arab States to United Nations global conferences; (b) participation of ESCWA in the meetings of the High-level Steering Committee and of the Technical Coordination Committee of the Pan Arab Project for Family Health of the League of Arab States, the two committees that assist in the management of the above project, which was launched in September 2000 and is expected to have a duration of four years; (c) co-sponsoring and making a substantive contribution to an inter-agency meeting on youth and employment of Arab States (Beirut, May 2000); and (d) having ESCWA conduct workshops, during the twenty-fifth session of the Commission for Arab Women of the League (Cairo, April 2000), on sharpening negotiation skills of Arab delegations taking part in the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century".

25. In the area of environment, the League of Arab States designated ESCWA and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) as principal actors for regional preparations for the 10-year review of progress achieved in the implementation of the outcome of the Untied Nations Conference on Environment and Development and follow-up at the regional level on the implementation of Agenda 21.[2] In the area of statistics, ESCWA and the Council of Economic Unity of the League prepared a Glossary of National Accounts in Arabic, English and French. Other areas of cooperation included presentation, by ESCWA, of papers to conferences and meetings held by the League in the areas of efficient use of energy in the building sector; the Habitat Agenda[3] and the role of non-governmental organizations in urban development; harmonization of industrial norms, regulation and legal instruments for regional cooperation; and the development of an integrated transport system in the Arab Mashreq.

26. ESCWA is cooperating with the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations (AGFUND) in the implementation of two projects: (a) community development services, phase II, which started in early 2000; and (b) development of a gender statistics programme in the Arab countries, initiated in 1997. The second project, which covered eight Arab countries, is being extended to cover Bahrain and Morocco. Moreover, an understanding has been reached between ESCWA and the Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR) to undertake joint activities in the areas of women and the family within the context of follow-up to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century". This included the organization of a workshop and production of a regional publication on globalization and women's economic conditions in the Arab world.

27. ESCWA also cooperated with a number of other regional organizations by participating in and making substantive contributions to their meetings and conferences in the areas of agriculture, industry, technology, the World Trade Organization, energy and water policies, transport and Mediterranean development.

Notes

[1] Helsinki Final Act available at <http://www.osce.org/docs/english/1990-1999/summits/helfa75e.htm> and Bonn Document at <http://www.osce.org/docs/english/1973-1990/other_experts/bonn90e.htm> Accessed on 17 May 2001.

[2] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992*, vol. I, *Resolutions Adopted by the Conference* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex II.

[3] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), Istanbul, 3-14 June 1996* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.97.IV.6), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.